



## DIPLOMAT

Spain and Kuwait  
share a deep historic  
relationship

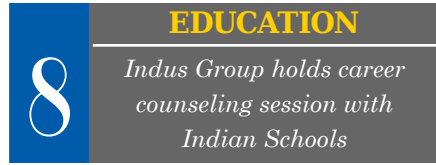
3



## LOCAL

Cabinet orders cancellation  
of musical events in  
solidarity with Palestine

5



## EDUCATION

Indus Group holds career  
counseling session with  
Indian Schools

8



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250 Fils

# Climate change needs response change



## THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

A communiqué issued last week by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) ministers in charge of climate affairs, reiterated the GCC commitment to principles and provisions of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and to the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Issued on the sidelines of the Middle East and North Africa Climate Week 2023 (MENA CW 2023) that was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from 8-12 October, the communiqué called for the scaling up of global efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. But the statement

also stressed the need to adopt a gradual and practical approach to realize the Agreement's targets in reducing the greenhouse gas emissions, taking into account the national conditions in each country and the availability of technological solutions.

The statement also encouraged efforts aimed to triple the production of renewable energy globally by 2030, through goals and policies, as well as by leveraging other low- and zero-emission technologies, in line with national conditions. The ministers also noted that the international community should avoid excluding major energy sources, or neglecting to invest in them, which could lead to challenges in energy markets and have an unequal impact, especially on developing



countries. In this regard, they called for adopting a 'balanced approach' to boost global economic growth closely linked to energy security and availability. This, the ministers said, could be achieved through taking advantage of

various energy sources and working to achieve transition to clean energy in a practical, gradual, and fair manner.

In his address at the event, Kuwait's Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Dr.

Saad AlBarak said that a week dedicated to climate change in the MENA region is imperative given the magnitude of the matter. He hailed the initiative as beneficial to regional climate change goals, and noted that the gathering allowed participants a chance to "sort out their priorities" in the run up to COP28.

The UN climate change conference COP28, scheduled to be held in the United Arab Emirates from 30 November to 12 December, provides Kuwait with a singular opportunity to articulate more ambitious climate change strategies, and implement bold initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and mitigate potential devastating temperature increases.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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# Indian Embassy organizes B2B meeting on tourism to India

The Embassy of India organized a Business-to-Business (B2B) meeting titled, "Exploring Incredible India" to promote tourism to India at the Millennium Hotel & Convention Centre on 11 October. The event included a tourism symposium that involved presentations by leading destination management companies and renowned hoteliers from Taj, Oberoi and Leela hotel chains of India. The symposium was well-attended by various stakeholders, particularly heads and representatives of over 150 travel agencies in Kuwait. Well-known travel bloggers and travel writers from Kuwait also shared their India experiences during the occasion. The event also included a lively and information-rich interaction through panel discussions, presentations, and videos along with dedicated sessions for B2B networking.

Highlighting the enormous tourism potential of India, Ambassador of India, H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika underlined the 'complete tourism experience' that India offers. He underscored six specific points on India tourism — abundant natural beauty and varied tourism destinations in



India; world-class tourism infrastructure; Indian cultural ethos; ease of travel through digital applications; and economically a value for money proposition compared to similar facilities in other countries. Ease of obtaining an Indian tourist visa was specifically highlighted by the ambassador who noted that a six-month multiple entry tourist visa is provided by the Indian Embassy in Kuwait within one day. Representatives of



Indian travel and hotel industry gave vivid presentations on Indian tourism options, luxury destinations, different theme-based circuits such as summer, winter, adventure, spa and wellness, nature, culture and shopping, and end-to-end travel solutions and packages. Tour operators in Kuwait were briefed about the options, as well as provided with informative brochures or booklets. The event was also live-streamed on the

embassy's social media platforms for maximum outreach to the wider Kuwaiti public. An E-brochure on different facets of Indian tourism was also unveiled on the occasion by the ambassador, which is available on the embassy website and social media platforms. The embassy said it will continue to disseminate information about tourism to India through various follow-up events and activities.

## Big 5 Global returns for its 44th edition in Dubai bringing together 2,200+ exhibitors and 68,000+ attendees to capitalize on opportunities worth \$7 trillion in MEASA

Big 5 Global, the largest and most-influential construction industry event in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA) is set to take place at Dubai World Trade Centre from 4 – 7 December 2023. With registrations open for participants who wish to attend the annual gathering of the global construction industry, the event aims to host 2,200+ exhibitors and 68,000+ attendees from more than 150 countries for four days of valuable business networking, fruitful partnerships and knowledge exchange.

Big 5 Global unites the whole industry bringing together contractors, developers, architects, engineers, consultants, disruptors, innovators and suppliers to ESG advisors and international and local policymakers, empowering the development of the construction industry.

The construction industry is booming in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA)

diversity of offerings with the participation of 2,200+ exhibitors but also fosters international collaborations and promotes cross-border partnerships as stakeholders from different parts of the world come together to share products and services whilst driving the industry towards a sustainable future."

### Eight product sectors at Big 5 Global

In its 44th edition, Big 5 Global is once again accompanied by eight specialized events covering the entire construction value chain. These include Big 5 Heavy, Middle East Concrete, Windows Doors & Facades Event, Gulf Glass, HVAC R, Middle East Stone, the Urban Design & Landscape Expo and FM Expo.

Twenty country pavilions shine the spotlight on construction solutions from Germany, Italy, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, the UK, Türkiye, Cyprus, India, Austria and China, among others. "The return of Austria's participation

and finishes, construction technologies and personal protective equipment, intelligent buildings, MEP services, off-site and modular construction, digital construction products and services and solar products, technologies, and services.

### Advancing thought leadership

Big 5 Global brings together leaders, experts, innovators and practitioners from various related industries, such as contracting, architecture, engineering, technology and sustainability, among others to maximize the potential of the regional construction market, as a global leader.

In 2023, Big 5 Global is accompanied by Big 5 Global Leaders' Summit, Big 5 FutureTech Summit as well as Big 5 Talks which are being held under 10 different streams including Project Management, Concrete, Geotechnical, Architecture, Solar, Facilities Management & Retrofit, Facades, HVAC R & MEP, Offsite & Modular, Technology, and Urban Design & Landscape.

"As we convene at this year's Big 5 Global Leaders' Summit, I am reminded that our shared commitment to sustainability must evolve from pledges to actions. The government, private and public sector must work together to maintain and define the roadmap needed to rapidly increase the adoption of energy efficiency and wellbeing in our built environment. Through dialogues at the summit, alongside other industry thought leaders, we'll explore ideas and discuss ways to drive a sustainable future for the industry," said H.E. Dr. Ali Al Jassim, Chair, Emirates Green Building Council, commenting on his participation at the summit.

"Through Big 5 Global, we bring diverse expertise, foster a culture of thought leadership and expose the MEASA region's construction industry to new innovations and best practices. This exposure to global viewpoints at the summits encourages thought leaders to think beyond their local contexts and adapt to global trends," added Greenish.

This year's Big 5 Global will celebrate the 3rd edition of Big 5 Global Impact Awards, recognizing innovation, sustainable development, technology and digital achievements in the construction industry in 19 categories. With shortlists being announced, 100 finalists will undergo intense competition to lift the winner's trophy.



region, with over \$7 trillion in active projects and \$3.8 trillion worth of recently awarded projects, according to ABIQ. The increasing number of projects in the region attracts a wide range of stakeholders, making Big 5 Global the ultimate platform for numerous opportunities for both local and global companies wanting to meet decision makers.

The UAE Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure continues to support the event, emphasizing the importance of industry collaboration and tackling the impact of climate change.

Ben Greenish, Senior Vice President – Construction, dmg events, organiser of Big 5 Global said: "For 43 years, Big 5 Global has continued to serve as a true testament to the region's attractiveness in the global construction arena, bringing together groundbreaking ideas, cutting-edge technologies and unparalleled expertise. The event not only enhances the

at Big 5 Global after 5 years underscores the importance of showcasing innovations on a global stage. It comes at a time when Austria is seeking to meet new buyers in the booming MEASA market and engage in partnerships," added Greenish.

The event gathers over 50,000 products and solutions and welcomes a host of new-to-show brands such as ARISTON from Italy, Henkel from Germany; Stanley Black & Decker and Milwaukee Tool from the US; UAE-based Galadari, Genavco, ModDsys and Mapei; SIEMENS (GCG Group) from Kuwait, among others. Some of the exhibiting brands include DUTCO TENNANT, Emirates Steel, Grundfos, Honeywell, NAFFCO, SCHÜCO, RAKTherm and USG ME.

Eight product sectors take the centre stage at Big 5 Global including building envelope and special construction, building interiors



## Illegal airport taxi drivers to be deported

Acting Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, has issued immediate instructions for a crackdown on illegal passenger services at Kuwait International Airport. These instructions are reportedly in response to complaints by retired citizens licensed to operate airport taxis, who say that unlicensed airport taxi services negatively impact their earnings.

The minister has ordered that, along with airport security personnel, a significant number of traffic investigation officers should be deployed outside the airport round-the-clock. Their primary mission is to apprehend any residents caught loading passengers illegally and promptly deport them from the country. For illegal residents (Bedoon), their vehicles will be impounded for a period of two months, and they will face precautionary detention for 48 hours.

This swift action by Minister Al-Khaled has been welcomed by the licensed taxi operators, who said that illegal taxi service providers not only threaten the livelihood of retired citizens, but also undermine the rights of passengers arriving at Kuwait International Airport. They pointed out that retired taxi drivers who hold permits from the General Administration of Civil Aviation and are accredited at the airport, should have legitimate oversight to offer transportation services to travelers. In contrast, private vehicle owners engaging in these activities are often unidentified individuals, some of whom have been reported to deceive travelers by accepting money for fake hotel reservations, or charging exorbitant rates for their service.

Reports indicate that the interior ministry is expected to convene a meeting soon of the approximately 500 airport taxi drivers, with the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior and security leaders, to address the demands of taxi owners and collaborate on finding solutions to the ongoing issues at Kuwait International Airport.





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## Spain and Kuwait share a deep historic relationship



### THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Miguel Moro Aguilar held a grand reception on 12 October at the St. Regis hotel to mark Spanish National Day.

The event was attended by Kuwait's Assistant Foreign minister for European Affairs, Sadiq Marafi, who was the chief guest, as well as a large gathering of diplomats, businessmen, professionals, Spanish citizens and friends of Spain.

In his address to the gathering, Ambassador Aguilar pointed out that it was always necessary to highlight this important occasion as it helps people to remember where Spaniards came from and the long road down history to the current point.

Spain, he said, was one of the oldest nation-states in the world, with more than five centuries of common, fruitful existence; a nation with deep historic links with the Spanish American countries, and with some Asian and African ones as well. The result was a culturally rich, vibrant community of nations on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and beyond.

The ambassador added that in their long History, the Arab legacy was not only part of their heritage, but it was also present in many aspects of their Spanish identity. He pointed out that many pages had been written by historians about the period of the Arabs in the Spanish Al Andalus, as well as about the flourishing periods of coexistence and tolerance among the so-called three cultures in the XI or XII centuries, in cities such as Toledo or Cordoba, the Arab Kurtuba. He said that the Spaniards were very proud of those pages of their history and they vindicate nowadays their value and meaning.

Ambassador Aguilar also stressed that his country "plays an active role in the global battle against climate change, and was ready to cooperate with Kuwait and other Gulf Cooperation Council countries in confronting environmental challenges."

He also underlined the strength of relations between the European Union and Kuwait at a time when Spain assumed the presidency of the Council for a period of six months. He pointed out that Spain was trying to give a boost to relations between the European Union, Kuwait and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

The recent ministerial conference between the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in Oman, is a testimony to that initiative

He also spoke on the visit last week by the European Union's Special Envoy to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and to Kuwait, and the recent approval last September of some of the more open visa regulations for the Schengen Area for Kuwaitis.

The Spanish ambassador revealed that within two weeks Kuwait Airways would commence a new direct flight from Kuwait to Barcelona. The airline has been flying direct to Madrid since last year and is now connecting the two capitals for the first time in nearly 40 years. He noted that direct flights were a real distinctive feature in the relations between the two countries and would contribute decisively to enhancing their already excellent tourism numbers.

Ambassador Aguilar also spoke about the recent terrible flare up of deadly violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the utterly condemnable attack on civilians. We believe that there is no alternative to a return, sooner or later (the later the worse, as it will only bring

more pain and suffering), to some horizon and prospects for a peaceful solution among the parties based on the international parameters and the relevant UN resolutions.

The terrible events unfolding in various parts of the world, such as the war in Ukraine lasting already too long or, as we see once again, those happening here in the Middle East or in Africa, remind us, once again that international dynamics in recent years are indeed on a wrong path and that we cannot ignore the festering conflicts, thinking that they will just vanish or fade away, as by magic.

There is no reasonable alternative, than a return to a multilateral rules-based order, where international law and the principles of the UN Charter prevail over the 'jungle law' and the fierce competition amongst nations, which is an old recipe for disaster as mother history consistently teaches us. These are principles and values that we share with Kuwait, a country with which we already enjoy a fluid cooperation in the international fora.

He also took the opportunity to congratulate Kuwait on its election earlier this week to the UN Human Rights Council.



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# Kuwait maintains healthy trade surplus in 1H 2023



**K**uwait's trade performance in the first-half (1H) of 2023 showed a trade surplus of KD6.8 billion, indicating that the country continues to maintain its healthy trade surplus despite challenging

global situations. Latest data from the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) revealed that total exports during the first six months stood at around KD12.7 billion, with imports amounting to KD5.8 billion.

Oil and its derivatives formed the main ingredient in the export sector, accounting for KD11.7 billion, or 92 percent of total export revenue. The remaining 8 percent of export revenue came from non-oil exports of KD582 million and re-exports of KD350 million. to the total export value. Re-exported products played a notable role as well, amounting to about 350 million dinars.

The CSB data displayed a decline in the total export revenue relative to the same period last year, when total exports totalled around

KD15.7 billion dinars. Officials attributed the decline to the dual factors of falling oil prices and production cuts to comply with agreements among the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its non-OPEC members.

On the other hand, imports during 1H-2023 were higher than the KD5.1 billion in imports registered during the first six months of 2022. Among the high-value imports this year, automobiles topped the list at KD743 million dinars, a significant rise from the KD489 million in 2022.

Other major imports included jewelry and gold at KD310 million, mobile phones and other communication equipment KD226 million, medicines KD165 million, serums and

vaccines KD74 million, cosmetics KD63 million, and interestingly, despite anti-smoking campaigns, cigarettes and tobacco products worth KD50 million were imported in 1H-2023.

The CSB figures also revealed that food stuff, including KD75 million of fruits and vegetables, KD33 million of fish and crustaceans, and KD31million of live animals, were imported during the first six months of this year. Kuwait's top-five trading partners in the first half of 2023 continued to be China at KD1 billion, the United States at KD536 million, the United Arab Emirates KD531 million, Japan KD357 million, and India KD322 million. These five countries played a significant role in Kuwait's import and export activities during the period.

## Climate change needs response change

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The vanilla responses and policies Kuwait has previously propounded to tackle climate change will no longer suffice. This is especially so, considering that Kuwait is among the most vulnerable countries in the world to the vagaries of climate aberrations, and can no longer afford to ignore its looming repercussions. Located at the northern tip of the Arabian Gulf in a largely arid region, Kuwait is buffeted by extreme weather patterns and climatic conditions for much of the year.

Scorching heat in summer, biting cold in winter, and heavy winds that generate frequent dust storms, scant annual rainfall, no natural surface water source, and rapidly depleting aquifers, are just indicative of the country's harsh environment. Negligible arable land and limited agriculture also makes the country highly vulnerable to food insecurity. The country is also ranked among the top-five 'extremely water-stressed' countries in the world.

Climate change is expected to exacerbate all of the ecological challenges, and create new ones, such as sea level rise. Numerous studies by local and international experts and institutions have identified several direct fallouts as a result of unmitigated climate change in Kuwait. Among others, these include higher temperatures, decreased precipitation, and an increase in sea level:

Kuwait is already one of the hottest countries in the world, with average summer temperatures regularly exceeding 40 degrees Celsius. Climate change is expected to make Kuwait even hotter, with average temperatures projected to increase by 5.5°C by the end of the century. The rise in temperature could lead to more frequent and intense heat waves and dust storms that could make living, and working outdoors intolerable.

Temperature rise could also have a significant impact on the environment and human health, particularly for vulnerable groups such as newborns, the elderly and those with chronic health conditions. A recent study by researchers at Kuwait University found that rising temperatures could have a significant negative impact on public health and could lead to a 5-11 percent hike in heat-related deaths.

In addition, the meager annual rainfall in the country is predicted to further decrease under worsening climate conditions. Studies show that average annual rainfall, which is typically around 112 millimeters (mm) per year, could fall by 25-30 percent by the turn of the century. This drop in annual precipitation could exacerbate existing water scarcity and increase aridity of soil, making even the limited arable land unsuitable for cultivation.

Studies also show that the projected rise in sea level of 0.5-1 meter due to climate change could inundate a large portion of the coastline. With most of the urban areas located in, or close to the coast, any sea level rise could have devastating effects on the population, infrastructure, and on utility supplies. Power stations and desalination plants that provide nearly all of the country's potable water are all located at sea level.

Aware of the challenges posed by climate change, the government has been taking several steps to mitigate and adapt to climate repercussions. Kuwait has issued a National Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2019-2030, that outlines over 50 short-medium- and long-term initiatives aimed at mitigating and adapting to climate change. On the GHG emission front, the country has set a target of

meeting 15 percent of its energy needs from renewable sources by 2030, and reducing the equivalent of 7.4 percent of its total carbon dioxide emissions by 2035.

Other sustainability plans include achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 in the oil and gas sector, and in the rest of the sectors by 2060. While these proactive measures are welcome, Kuwait clearly needs to do more. As a major oil producer and with an economy overwhelmingly dominated by fossil fuel revenues, the country needs to further reduce its GHG emissions and consumption patterns, as well as actively pursue renewable energy sources, and transition to a more sustainable economy.

Challenges posed by harsh weather and geographic conditions are not limited to Kuwait, other GCC countries are also confronted by similar challenges and equally endangered by long-term climatic aberrations. Given the vulnerability of the Gulf states to climate change, one would have expected the communiqué issued by the GCC ministers' at MENA CW2023 to recommend more robust measures and specific solutions to mitigate climate change impacts on the region.

In the end, the paradoxical elements in the GCC communiqué — 'scaling up efforts to limit global temperature rises', while stressing a gradual approach to reducing GHG emissions; or, 'tripling renewable energy production', while calling for continued investment in fossil fuels — were a reflection of the prevailing ambivalence among major oil and gas producing countries and companies, on tackling climate change while clinging on to fossil fuels.

However, it would be amiss on our part not to acknowledge that GCC states have undertaken several significant steps and launched initiatives aimed at mitigating and adapting to climate change. In recent years there has been an increased momentum in such regional initiatives, including the Middle East Green Initiative launched by Saudi Arabia that aims to plant 40 billion trees across the region and reduce carbon emissions by 60 percent with the help of clean hydrocarbon technologies.

Similarly, the United Arab Emirates, which was the first in the MENA region to announce its strategic initiative to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, is also among the few countries launching initiatives aimed at tackling global water scarcity, a crisis that is likely to be exacerbated by climate change. Last month, the country's foreign ministry published a detailed discussion paper titled, 'Ripple Effect Water Scarcity – The Hidden Threat to Global Security and Prosperity'.

In his foreword to the discussion paper, the UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, noted that while the MENA region continues to rank among the most water-stressed nations on earth, the problem of water scarcity is now spreading to many other parts of the world, accelerated by factors including climate change, population growth and continued economic development.

He added that the UAE intends to launch a multifaceted initiative to confront the issue of global water scarcity, including launching a non-profit initiative "dedicated to accelerating the development, testing and deployment of transformative solutions to address global water scarcity". The initiative also aims to leverage the combined capabilities of UAE's academic institutions, government agencies and water-related industries to accelerate innovation, and facilitate deployment of new technolo-

gies that could address water scarcity, sustainably and affordably.

In addition, the country would introduce domestic policies to improve water sustainability through water conservation initiatives, and accelerate implementation of the UAE Water Security Strategy 2036. Most importantly, the UAE foreign minister's foreword noted that the discussion paper represented an open invitation to other members of the international community to work with the UAE to help shape and advance concerted global efforts to address water scarcity.

Hydrocarbon rich countries are undoubtedly keen to protect their fossil fuel infrastructure and in-ground assets, and reluctant to diversify their prevailing economic model, or encourage the transition of the local labor market to cleaner renewable energy sources or technologies. A major reason for this resistance to change, stems from the fact that oil and gas income forms the main revenue source for many of these states. An interesting analogous

situation in the past was when the first automobiles came on the scene more than a century ago. Back then, while smart horse-and-carriage operators transitioned to the new travel mode, many others chose to cling on to their horses. They argued that the new four-wheeled contraption was just a fad that would fade in a short while, while their horse carriages would still be around. In a way they were right, some horse carriages are still around, but they are now largely confined to amusement parks.

While the disinclination among fossil-fuel states to change is understandable, it is not condonable, especially considering the significant cost this intransigence poses to global sustainability and survival. When people and the planet are faced by the existential threat of climate change, tenaciously holding on to fossil fuel economies is egregious, unethical and also unsustainable in the long run. As Kuwait's oil minister so succinctly put it, there is certainly a need for the GCC states to 'sort out priorities'.

## Asian Exhibition 2023 a resounding success



By Ricky Laxa  
Staff Writer

**T**he 5th Asian Exhibition 2023 held at Al Salam Mall on the 6 October was a huge success as the exhibition welcomed a record-number of visitors eager to know more about Asian countries with their diverse cultures, customs and cuisines. The exhibition was organized by Masterclass Kuwait Company in collaboration with Al Salam Mall.

The event commenced with a soft opening of the exhibition at 10am with a ceremonial cutting of the ribbon by ambassadors and charges D'affaires from the embassies of Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Mongolia and Kyrgyz Republic. The event was officiated by the Ambassador of Vietnam, H.E. Ngo Toan Thang, along with Al Salam Mall Manager Sabiha Abdulla, who was the consultant to the event.

A brief cultural presentation was then staged by students from the New Kuwait Philippine International School, who highlighted traditional dances from the Philippines. This was followed by vocal renditions and cultural performances

by artists from Mongolia, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The event was hosted by a team of DJs from Mega Love Radio.

Al Ansari Exchange, a major sponsor to the event showcased their services on the ground floor by providing gifts to clients who avail their services during the event. Friendi Mobile and Sky Rink gave out prizes for the games organized by Mega Love Radio throughout the event. Popular vloggers and influencers also graced the said occasion. In his closing remarks, Ambassador Thang of Vietnam thanked Masterclass for organizing the event and bringing Asia to limelight through the participation of embassies, communities, services, and products. He also thanked everyone for coming to the event.

A total of 60 exhibitors were present during the event with Philippines and Pakistan communities providing major participation. Food, health, beauty and consumer products, travel agencies, clothes, IT services, recruitment, law firms and art were among the exhibitors during the event.

Masterclass extended its gratitude to the participating embassies, exhibitors, sponsors, media personnel, Mega Love Radio and BSI Innovations for contributing to the success of the event.





## LuLu Hypermarket organizes 'Taste of Spain' promotion

### Cabinet orders cancellation of musical events in solidarity with Palestine



The Cabinet directed the suspension of musical shows in solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people, and in affirmation of the State of Kuwait's permanent position in support of the Palestinian cause and the developments in the Gaza Strip.

The Government Communication Center stated through its official account on the X (formerly Twitter) platform that the decision comes in solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people, who are exposed to the ugliest types of Zionist aggression, the Council of Ministers directed the Ministry of Information to stop all forms of musical programmes in the State of Kuwait in solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people as a result of the Zionist aggression and mourning for the souls of the righteous martyrs.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Information is working to implement the directives of the Council of Ministers in solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people. The Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information for Press, Publishing and Publications, Lafi Al-Subaie, announced that the Ministry of Information will stop all artistic and musical concerts in Kuwait as of today, in implementation of the directives of the Council of Ministers in this regard in solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people.

Al-Subaie said that the suspension of concerts will include all events that the Ministry of Information had issued a license to hold earlier, stressing that this comes as an expression of Kuwait's firm and principled position towards the Palestinian cause, especially at this stage and the developments it is witnessing.

### Health and Fitness Association to stage body-building competition



By Ricky Laxa  
Staff Writer

Health and Fitness Association, a Filipino organization catering to health and fitness enthusiasts and trainers will stage a body-building competition on 17 November at Al Zumereida Hall in Salwa from 1 pm till 5 pm. The all-star Filipino event will see competition among trainers from different gyms and fitness centers in Kuwait.

In a brief interview last week, the President of the organization, Jurlick Balabat Jr., stated that the competition hopes to create awareness among Overseas Filipino Workers about the importance of being healthy and fit to be able to deliver their commitment to work and family effectively.

"This is not just a competition but an empowerment opportunity for everyone who believes 'health is indeed wealth,' commented Balabat Jr. The competition includes three different categories namely: under 70, under 75 and above 75 kilograms. Three winners will emerge from each category and first prize winners will compete for the major title.

"Participating in this competition is not easy for competitors, as each of them will have to prepare themselves by engaging in a strict diet, rigorous workout and discipline," said Emmanuel Galicia, adviser to the group. Arsenio Agpoon, founder of the organization, extended his gratitude to the officers and members for their time and effort in organizing the event.

To mark Spain's National Day, LuLu Hypermarket, the prominent retail chain in the region, organized an enticing 'Taste of Spain' promotion, running from October 11th to October 17th across all its branches in Kuwait.

The week-long promotion was inaugurated on 11 October at the LuLu Qurain outlet by the Spanish Ambassador, H.E. Miguel Moro Aguilar, along with LuLu Kuwait's top management. A major draw of the event was the amazing offers on all Spanish-branded products.

The inauguration also witnessed a lively performance by a talented Spanish music band, and an energetic display of traditional dances by a special dance troupe. Attractive displays and cutouts of traditional Spanish monuments, and large creative displays of Spanish products, as well as a decor that reflected Spanish themes, added to the promotional atmosphere.

Other highlights of the seven-day Spanish product festival included food stalls selling delicious Spanish

street-food, and free food sampling booths that offered a taste of various Spanish dishes.

Among the prime products offered at very special prices were items from leading Spanish brands, including Acanto Botanical Olive Oil, Mueloliva Olive Oil, and Hutesa Olive that showcased the variety and richness of Spanish olive cultivation. Along with the superb olive oils, other exemplary items were the Cloudem sparkling beverages that offered a refreshingly fizzy touch to any occasion, as well as the renowned Spanish Gullon Biscuits. And, from the realm of spices was the Taj Mahal Saffron, which stands as a symbol of Spain's culinary heritage, with its exquisite aroma and vibrant color elevating dishes to new heights.

The 'Taste of Spain' promotion, which left shoppers with a new-found appreciation for Spanish products, once again highlighted LuLu Hypermarket's commitment to stocking its shelves with some of the finest products from around the world at very competitive prices.

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# Social media addiction impacting mental health of youth

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has one of the highest per capita social media penetration in the world. Despite this widespread adoption, a majority of youth in the area said they struggle to disconnect from these platforms and that the addiction to social media is having a negative impact on their mental health.

These, and other findings, emerged from a recent survey on 'Lifestyles' among Arab Youth conducted by ASDA'A BCW, the MENA region's leading communications consultancy. The survey

results were announced at a special event organized by blinx, a new digital media hub focused on Arab youth. The poll showed that with 77 percent internet penetration — higher than the global average of 65 percent — individual users in MENA have on average 8.4 social media accounts, and spend over 3.5 hours on them. Saudi Arabia is the biggest user of YouTube worldwide, where 68 percent of users consume more video digitally than on TV. The top five countries by reach for TikTok are in the MENA (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Iraq), while Saudi Arabia, Iraq and

Egypt are among the Top 15 largest national markets for SnapChat.

With such significant social media usage, it is not surprising that 74 percent of young Arabs said they struggle to disconnect from social media. In addition, 61 percent of those surveyed admitted that social media addiction negatively impacts their mental health.

The findings of the survey were launched at a special event organised by blinx, the new digital media hub focused on youth in the Middle East, to mark the World Mental Health Day (October 10). Sunil John, discussed the findings and their impact on the Arab world's changing media and digital landscape.

Other findings from the survey reveal that Facebook (18%) remained the most important social media platform for Arab Youth, followed closely by Instagram (17%), WhatsApp (16%), YouTube (13%), TikTok (12%), SnapChat (11%), X/Twitter (8%) and LinkedIn (4%). Notwithstanding the popularity of these platforms, an overwhelming majority (92%) of respondents said that big tech companies such as Meta, Apple, Netflix and Google have 'too much power', and that social media companies need to do more to stop disinformation on their sites.

Despite their struggle to disconnect, many young Arabs appear to be swayed by the prospect of fame via social media. Asked which field they would want to achieve fame, the highest percentage (13%) named 'social media influencer.' Achieving fame as chefs, food critics or food bloggers was equally popular (12%), while 11 percent said they would prefer to be known for their humanitarian work or for their contribution to technology.

One in ten young Arabs said they would like to be famous in the fashion sector as designers or models, while careers in education and in sports appealed to 9 percent, and only 8 percent said they preferred to be famous as a business person or entrepreneur. Interestingly, the respondents had the choice of selecting multiple options from over 30 options, including careers in industry, education, business, healthcare, tourism, and others.

Although social media dominates the lives of



Arab youth, when asked what defines their lifestyle, more than half (58%) said 'eating out', followed by 57 percent who replied 'hanging out with friends'. Wearing fashionable brands (42%), 'holidaying in new destinations' (36%), 'going to the movies' (31%), and 'driving a sports car' (30%) were other 'lifestyles' that youth in the region considered defined them.

On a different note, nearly two-thirds (61%) of the respondents said they get their news from social media, but this is a significant drop from 2019 when almost 80 percent of young Arabs named social media as their main source of news. Television, however, continues to be the second most preferred source of news for nearly half of young Arabs (45%).

A perceptible trend is the rise of online portals as a source of news for young Arabs. In 2019, over a third (38%) named online portals as their primary source of news; this has increased to 42 percent in 2023. Print dailies continue to see a steady decline, named by less than one in 10 (9%). However, television remained the most trusted source of news for young Arabs (89%), followed by online news portals (79%) and print dailies (76%). Incidentally, social media influencers are not as trusted with 42% saying they are 'not trustworthy'.

Announcing the findings at the blinx event on World Mental Health Day (10 August) President, MENA, BCW and Founder of ASDA'A BCW, Sunil John, said: "The overt dependence on social media appears to have left many young people living in a bubble, unaware of the socioeconomic realities.

## Hyatt Hotels Roadshow in Kuwait



As part of its Gulf roadshow tour, Hyatt hosted a dinner and networking event at Grand Hyatt Kuwait, where representatives from Hyatt hotels across the region met with leading travel and tourism agencies, valued partners, business leaders and key media in the country.



## 38th Grand Hyper opens branch in Kuwait



Grand Hypermarket, Kuwait's leading retail chain, inaugurated the Grand Fresh outlet at Salmiya Block 10, Street 11 last week. The new branch was inaugurated by Grand Hyper Kuwait Chairman Jassim Khameez Al Sharah, in the presence of Regional Director Ayub Kecheri, CEO Mohammad Suneer, Director Tahseer Ali, COO Mohammad Aslam Chelat and other distinguished guests, management representatives and well wishers.

The new outlet offers a range of fresh products, including fruits, vegetables and daily necessities from around the world, in addition

to a wide variety of products that cater to the tastes and needs of both expatriates and Kuwaiti citizens.



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## IWG and Bulgarian Embassy celebrate Bulgarian Cultural Day

**I**nternational Women's Group (IWG) in coordination with the Bulgarian Embassy celebrated Bulgarian Cultural Day at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on 8 October. President of IWG and spouse of the Ambassador of Bulgaria, Antonia Dimitrova, welcomed honored guests and members to the event.

In his speech on the occasion, Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria, H.E. Dimitar Dimitrov, expressed his happiness at participating and contributing in the event, especially at a time when Bulgaria and Kuwait are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between them. Thanking IWG for hosting the Bulgarian cultural day, he said that the event was an excellent opportunity to present some aspects of the culture and traditions of his country.

"We have a long history of relations with Kuwait and we are proud that this has been a history of true friendship and cooperation. It covers many areas, but culture has always played a special role in our relationship with Kuwait. Our cultural exchange has included exhibitions, participation in cultural festivals, concerts, cooperation between libraries and museums, exchange of students and other activities".

The Ambassador also spoke of the role of women, saying: "Being the guest today of an association which unites women from different countries and nationalities I cannot help but emphasize the role of women in our Bulgarian society. They play a very active part in all areas of life, but I should recognize that in many ways our women are the true guardians of the Bulgarian cultural and spiritual traditions."

He went on to note that the Bulgarian state emerged in the Balkans more than 14 centuries



ago, with its traditions and culture combining the heritage of many ancient civilizations and peoples, including Ancient Thrace, Greece and Rome, but also the Near East. "A number of Bulgarian sites and traditions are included in UNESCO's world heritage list. Alongside the natural beauties of

Bulgaria, our cultural richness attracts millions of foreign tourists each year", he said.

The Vice President of IWG, Polina Dlamini, then presented the Bulgarian Ambassador and his wife with an honorary shield and thanked them for organizing this special day, and delighting the

attendees with the cultural richness and beauty of Bulgaria.

During the event, a short film about Bulgaria was shown, highlighting the various natural and cultural heritage sites, historical monuments, magnificent mountains, lakes, caves, mineral springs and adventure tourism activities in the country. Talented harpist, Violeta Shabanliyska, then gave an impressive musical rendition on the harp of several works by Bulgarian composers.

The event included a visual display of handicrafts and cultural items of traditional ritual along with traditional Bulgarian folklore costumes, which are distinguished by their originality.

Several popular Bulgarian dishes, prepared by the chefs of the Crowne Plaza Hotel, were also served against a backdrop of traditional Bulgarian music. At the end of this Bulgarian cultural Day, precious raffles were offered, which included prizes from the Embassy of Bulgaria.

## CITRA launches new services on Sahel app

**C**ommunications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) has unveiled three new services accessible through the government online application 'Sahel', covering areas that improve services for businesses and individuals.

"Sahl." These services cover areas related to customs release, frequency spectrum, and individual requests, reported Al-Rai Daily.

Detailing the offerings, CITRA noted that the new 'customs release services', encompasses customs release requests for import, temporary import, temporary export, and export of products, as well as streamlining customs-related processes for businesses and individuals.

The 'frequency spectrum services' now



permit users to apply for permits related to marine radio services and radio services for radio amateurs. Additionally, the application process for the release of communications equipment is now more accessible.

The 'individual services' now made available through 'Sahel' will enable users to request the blocking or unblocking of electronic content, thereby enhancing user control over online experiences.



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GIS School visit



# Indus Group holds career counseling session with Indian Schools

**I**ndus Group, a pioneer and leading exhibition organizer in India, held a career counseling and guidance session with students of FAIPS (DPS) and Gulf Indian School (GIS) last week at their respective campuses. The event was aimed at providing advice and guidance to students on their future education choices.

The sessions were attended by experienced career counselors who provided valuable insights to students on career opportunities, industry trends, and job market demands. The counselors also gave guidance on which courses and degrees would be most beneficial for students to pursue in order to achieve their career goals.

In their first school visit the educational team was warmly welcomed by Gulf Indian School Principal, Dr. S. Prashant Vasudev. He thanked the organizers for their timely presentation to the children, who would greatly benefit from the interaction with the career counselors.

The students were encouraged to ask questions and share their concerns with the counselors. The counselors provided personalized advice based on each student's interests and aspirations. They also highlighted

the importance of gaining practical experience and building a strong network in the industry.

During their second school visit the career guidance team was warmly welcomed by FAIPS (DPS) Principal Ravi Ayanoli who appreciated the initiative taken to provide the students with a first hand insight on career options.

Speaking about the event, Thiagrajan from the Indus Group said, "We are committed to providing students with the right guidance to

help them make informed decisions about their future. The career counseling and interaction meet is just one of the many initiatives we take to support the Indian education system."

Indus Group has been organizing exhibitions in India since 1995 and has organized over 120 exhibitions across the country. The group has also organized over 150 exhibitions in 20 countries, including 111 India Education Exhibitions across 20 countries/cities, making it a leading player in

the exhibition organization industry.

Indus Group's goals also include making India one of the top destinations for education in the world by organizing events across 50+ countries and bringing 15,000 students to India, while bridging the gap between students and top universities and institutions worldwide. Their mission is to promote education tourism, create awareness about emerging career opportunities, and empower students to make informed decisions about their future.

Overall, the career counseling and interaction meet was a great success, with students leaving with a better understanding of the education and career opportunities available to them. Indus Group remains committed to supporting the Indian education system and helping students achieve their career goals.

Among the participating universities who were able to share valuable advice and knowledge to the children were Vellore Institute of Technology, Dr. MGR Educational & Research Institute, Vishwakarma University, Vishwakarma Institute of Technology, BML Munjal University, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), RV University, and Acharya Institutes.



FAIPS School visit





# Next-Gen Ford Everest Is Bold Outside, a Sanctuary on the Inside and Engineered for Adventure



- Everest offers a choice of durable powertrains that includes its proven best-in-class 2.3-litre EcoBoost turbo petrol engine and the 2.0-litre turbodiesel engines for select markets.



- Built tough and capable on the outside, the Next-Gen Ford Everest's sanctuary-like interior provides occupants with a comfortable, safe, high-tech and inviting cabin designed for daily duties and long road trips.

The Next-Gen Ford Everest made its Middle East debut for the first time ever, blending adventure-ready capability with exceptional comfort and customer-focused technology in a rugged, refined, and fun-to-drive SUV.

Engineered to excite, the Next-Gen Ford Everest has been built for the adventurous – with capability at its core. Inside, premium levels of craftsmanship have created a quiet and refined sanctuary for up to seven, while class-leading technology and safety features offer driver and passengers comfort and peace of mind on every journey.

"When we began imagining the Next-Gen Ford Everest, we started not at the beginning but at the end: With our customers," said Ian Foston, Chief Platform Engineer for Everest. "They're people who like adventure, recreation and being able to go out with family and friends. Whether they're conquering sand, rocks or city life, these customers appreciate the utility, capability and spaciousness of an SUV."

Armed with more customer input than ever before, Foston said the objective for the Next-Gen Ford Everest was clear: Tough on the outside, sanctuary on the inside, amazing capability underneath.

To showcase this, three trims of the Next-Gen Ford Everest were presented at the reveal; XLS, XLT and Limited. A range of different variants and models will be available, depending on the market, to meet the needs of Ford customers.

## Rugged outside, a sanctuary within

Everest's wider track and longer wheelbase enabled designers to create a more progressive, muscular appearance. Ford's global design DNA is reflected in the C-clamp headlamps and strong horizontal upper grille bar. The front end also has a mix of horizontal and vertical elements which add to the stable appearance.

On the sides, there is a strong shoulder line front to back, while the wide track width results in a dramatic swell over the wheels, delivering a strong and modern look.

"We showed customers the Everest at several points during the design process and their feedback was consistent: They loved the exterior with the strong and rugged design, but they also thought it was sleek and modern" said Andrew Gregory, Brand Marketing Manager for Everest at Ford Middle East. "They said that the Everest would give them the confidence to go off-road; it looks like a proper SUV."

What customers wanted on the interior was a different story. Inside, they wanted a sanctuary.

"One of the first things you'll notice when you get into a Next-Gen Ford Everest is how quiet it is," Gregory said. "We've all been in vehicles with multiple rows of seats, where you have to twist your head around and almost shout to be heard by passengers in the second or third rows. That's

an issue we wanted to solve for Everest, so the interior would be a quiet place in which you can easily talk to your family or friends and enjoy the journey together."

Designers also put a lot of thought into the function and feel of the interior, taking inspiration from modern homes and bringing in plush materials, premium finishes, and ambient lighting in areas customers will appreciate them best.

Everest's sense of spaciousness is amplified by the full-width coast-to-coast instrument panel and center console with dual cupholder recesses, plus dash-mounted 'pop-out' cupholders for front-seat occupants. The XLT and Limited trims are equipped with integrated wireless charging, while all series receive a svelte new leather trimmed e-Shifter, and an electric parking brake.

Access to the third row is much easier thanks to second-row seats that slide further forward than before. Additionally, all occupants now have places to store their things and depending on the model, charge their devices with power outlets in all three rows.

The Everest Limited trim further elevates the interior and exterior experience with a best-in-class Bang & Olufson 12-speaker system delivering premium audio ambient lighting and a dual-panel sunroof. On the outside, the Limited comes with exclusive 21-inch alloy wheels and a variety of chrome accents.

## Customer-focused technology

In addition to a more refined and comfortable interior, Ford focused on incorporating the latest connectivity and technology features into the Next-Gen Ford Everest. It comes with an 8-inch digital instrument panel that replaces the traditional analogue cluster, in addition to large, high-resolution portrait 10.1-inch or best-in-class 12-inch touchscreens.

Next-Gen Ford Everest is loaded with Ford's latest SYNC® 4A1 system, which comes customer-

ready with its voice-activated communications, entertainment, and information systems.

The portrait-orientated 12-inch screen is linked to a 360-degree camera with split-view display to make parking a breeze in tight urban spaces or to assist when negotiating particularly tricky terrain while out exploring. In addition, customers can control Everest's new exterior zone lighting system via the touchscreen, which means they don't have to park, work, camp, or do anything else in the dark.

The XLT and Limited series include a wireless charging dock, allowing for cable-free top-ups of device batteries and a windscreen mounted USB port to keep your camera charged while videoing your adventures. Additionally, a cooled glove box features in every trim of the Next-Gen Ford Everest.

For drivers of the Limited series, the Advanced Automated Parking System makes it easier than ever to fit their Everest into even the tightest of spots. The system controls the steering, accelerator, transmission and brake – although the driver can take over at any time by applying the brakes or taking their finger off the Park Aid button.

## New and proven engine line-up

Depending on the market, the Next-Gen Ford Everest gives customers a choice of two engines to suit their lifestyles. Starting with Ford's proven, 2.3L EcoBoost® Turbo petrol engine, mated to an efficient 10-speed SelectShift automatic which delivers Best-in-Class 296HP power and 420Nm of torque (more than any competitor V6).

## Engineered for adventure

With almost 20 years of history, the Everest nameplate has built a formidable reputation as a safe, trusted, capable, family SUV, winning a multitude of awards across the globe. A 50mm increase in Next-Gen Ford Everest's track helps deliver a more controlled ride on-road, while

tweaks to damper settings allowed the team to inject more fun and control into Everest's handling, both on- and off-road.

"Everest was always well regarded for its plush ride on- and off-road handling, but the track increase allowed our dynamics team to create a greater connection between vehicle and driver, with a more controlled fun to drive ride around town and on the highway," said Foston.

Want to do some exploring? Next-Gen Ford Everest is ready to go, with a 4x4 system utilizing a 2-speed Electronic Shift On the Fly (ESOF) transfer case, underbody skid plates, a rear locking differential and off-road selectable drive modes plus two functional tow hooks upfront.

Where available, Everest's dedicated off-road screens display vehicle information and a front camera view of the terrain ahead, with predictive overlay guidelines designed to help the driver negotiate obstacles. With a single button press, the driver can view their driveline and diff-lock indicators, steering angle and guides as well as vehicle roll and pitch angles.

Everest's impressive towing capability is supported by smart technologies that make towing easier. A dedicated tow/haul drive mode has been tuned to optimize gear shift timing to maintain the best power delivery and engine braking when carrying loads, either in a trailer or in the cargo area. Additionally, an available integrated electric trailer brake controller helps deliver smooth and effective control of a trailer's brake system. Everest's new camera views help owners guide their SUV into position to connect a trailer, while integrated SYNC® 4A features such as trailer connection checklist and trailer light check help make the job easier.

The new integrated or stand-off roof rails are more than just a design detail; they're engineered for adventure. The Everest rooftop can now support static loads of up to 350kg and dynamic loads of up to 100kg, providing increased versatility that enables it to carry bikes, kayaks, cargo pods, or roof-top tents. A universal mounting system allows customers to equip their vehicle with a range of accessories.

"The Next-Gen Ford Everest is a truly remarkable vehicle – one that is capable, safe, smart and powerful," said Pedro Simões, Marketing Director at Ford Middle East. "But just as important as the vehicle is a remarkable ownership experience."

"Everest customers lead busy lives, juggling work, family time, a social life and recreation. They need their vehicle ownership experience to be easier and more rewarding, so we've created a collection of services that, depending on market, are designed to help do just that."

"We see the moment you buy your vehicle as the beginning of our journey together, not the end," Simões said. "Our commitment is that we're here for you throughout the time you own your vehicle."





# FASHION TRENDS

## to Stay **STYLISH** IN 2023

15 - 21 October 2023

The Times Kuwait  
www.timeskuwait.com

**By Hermoine Macura-Noble**  
Special to The Times Kuwait

**F**ashion is a passion that is ever-evolving — with 2023 bringing a fresh wave of exciting trends for women. Whether you are looking to revamp your wardrobe or simply stay ahead of the curve, here are some of the key fashion trends you can expect to see this year.

**Sustainable Fashion:** The trend toward sustainable and eco-friendly fashion continues to grow. Expect to see more clothing made from organic materials, recycled fabrics, and sustainable production processes. Brands are increasingly focusing on reducing their environmental footprint.

**Oversized Blazers and coats:** Oversized blazers and coats are making a strong comeback. They are versatile and can be styled for both casual and formal occasions. Pair them with wide-legged pants for a chic and powerful look. Make sure to balance the proportions of your outfit. Pair them with more fitted or tailored pieces on the bottom, such as skinny jeans, leggings, or a pencil skirt for a polished look.

**Bohemian Vibes:** Boho-inspired fashion is back, with flowy dresses, fringe details, and earthy color palettes. Embrace your inner free spirit with maxi dresses, crochet pieces, and layered jewelry.

**Monochrome outfits:** Monochromatic

dressing is all about wearing a single color from head to toe. It creates a sleek and sophisticated look, and you can play with different shades of the same color for added depth. Black or white is always a great choice for any woman.

**Bright and Bold colors:** Vibrant and bold colors are in vogue this year. Think electric blues, fiery reds, and sunny yellows. Do not be afraid to make a statement with your outfit. Understanding your skin undertones is essential when selecting bright and bold colors. Brunettes can have warm, cool, or neutral undertones. For warm undertones, shades like fiery reds, sunny yellows and warm pinks can be flattering. For cool undertones, consider jewel tones like emerald and royal blue.



**Statement sleeves:** Sleeves are taking center stage, with exaggerated puffed sleeves, ruffles, and balloon sleeves making a splash. These details add drama and flair to any outfit.

**Faux Leather everything:** Faux leather is no longer just for jackets and boots anymore. Faux leather dresses, skirts, and even accessories are gaining popularity, giving outfits a touch of edge and sophistication. As a more ethical and sustainable alternative to real leather, more consumers are choosing vegan leather products to align their fashion choices with their values.

**A 90's Revival:** The '90s are making a comeback with baggy jeans, crop tops, and chunky sneakers. Channel your inner '90s icon and embrace the nostalgia.

**Athleisure:** Comfort is key, and athleisure continues to dominate the fashion scene. Sporty elements like joggers, hoodies, and sneakers are being incorporated into everyday outfits.

**Exotic Prints:** Animal prints, tropical motifs, and bold patterns are here to stay. Mix and match exotic prints to create eye-catching looks that exude confidence. Just remember to keep the color palette consistent and choose a print with a similar vibe. If you are new to exotic prints, begin with small accent pieces like scarves, belts, or statement jewelry.

Fashion is all about self-expression, so do not be afraid to adapt these trends to your personal style. Experiment, have fun, and embrace the trends that resonate with you the most to stay stylish and confident in 2023.

### Hermoine Macura-Noble

*The first Australian English speaking News Anchor in the Middle East. She is also the Author of Faces of the Middle East and Founder of US-based 501c3 charity – The House of Rest which helps to ease the suffering of victims of war. For more from our Contributing Editor, you can follow her on Instagram, @hello\_hermoine*





EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Freedom Without Justice



**Slavoj Žižek**

Professor of Philosophy at the European Graduate School, is International Director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities at the University of London and the author, most recently, of *Heaven in Disorder*.



**L**ea Ypi's *Free: Coming of Age at the End of History* has met with a hostile reception in her home country of Albania, and it is easy to see why. Her self-description as a 'Marxist Albanian professor of political theory at the London School of Economics' says it all.

Reading Ypi's book, I was struck by the parallel between her life and that of Viktor Kravchenko, the Soviet official who defected while visiting New York in 1944. His famous bestselling memoir, *I Chose Freedom*, became the first substantial eyewitness account of the horrors of Stalinism, beginning with its detailed description of the Holodomor (famine) in Ukraine in the early 1930s. Still a true believer at the time, Kravchenko had participated in enforcing collectivization, and therefore knew of what he spoke.

Kravchenko's publicly known story ends in 1949, when he triumphantly won a big libel suit against a French Communist newspaper. At the trial in Paris, the Soviets flew in his ex-wife to testify to his corruption, alcoholism, and domestic abuse. The court was not swayed, but people tend to forget what happened next. Immediately following the trial, when he was being hailed around the world as a Cold War hero, Kravchenko grew deeply worried about the anti-Communist witch hunts unfolding in the United States. To fight Stalinism with McCarthyism, he warned, was to stoop to the Stalinists' level.

As he spent more time in the West, Kravchenko grew increasingly aware of its own

not due to some nefarious KGB blackmail operation. It was an expression of despair, and further proof that his original denunciation of the Soviet Union had always been a genuine protest against injustice.

Ypi's *Free* does in one volume what Kravchenko did in two. When Albania descended into civil war in 1997, her whole world fell apart. Reduced to hiding in her apartment and writing a diary while Kalashnikov shots clattered outside, she made an extraordinary decision: She would study philosophy.

But what is even more extraordinary is that her engagement with philosophy brought her back to Marxism. Her story attests to the fact that the most penetrating critics of Communism have often been ex-Communists, for whom the critique of 'actually existing socialism' was simply the only way to remain faithful to their political commitments.

*Free* grew out of an earlier treatise on how socialist and liberal notions of freedom are interrelated, and it is this perspective that structures the book. The first part, on how Albanians 'chose freedom', provides an eminently readable memoir of Ypi's childhood in the last decade of communist rule in Albania. While it includes all the horrors of daily life — food shortages, political denunciations, control and suspicion, torture and harsh punishments — it is also punctuated by comical moments. Even under such harsh and desolate conditions, people found ways to preserve a modicum of dignity and honesty.

In the second part, which describes Albania's post-communist turmoil after 1990, Ypi recounts how the freedom chosen by — or, rather, imposed on — Albanians failed to deliver justice. It culminates in a chapter about the 1997 civil war, at which point the narrative breaks off and is replaced by snippets from Ypi's diary. The strength of Ypi's writing is that, even here, she is tackling the big questions, exploring how ambitious ideological projects usually end not in triumph but in confusion and disorientation.

In the 1990s, one such project was replaced by another. With communism toppled, ordinary Albanians were subjected to 'democratic transition' and 'structural reforms' designed to make them more 'like Europe' with its 'free market'. Ypi's bitter conclusion in the last paragraph of the book is worth quoting in full:

"My world is as far from freedom as the one my parents tried to escape. Both fall short of that ideal. But their failures took distinctive forms, and without being able to understand them, we will remain forever divided. I wrote my story to explain, to reconcile, and to continue the struggle."

the great initiators of both the Communist and liberal projects fell short.

The conclusion Ypi draws from this insight, however, is not the cynical stance that meaningful change is either impossible or inevitable. Rather, it is that the struggle (for freedom) goes on, and always will. Ypi thus feels that she owes a debt to "all the people of the past who sacrificed everything because they were not apathetic, they were not cynical, they did not believe that things fall into place if you just let them take their course."

Therein resides our global predicament. If we believe that things will fall into place by just letting them take their course, we will end up with multiple catastrophes, from ecological breakdown and the rise of authoritarianism to social chaos and disintegration. Ypi channels what philosopher Giorgio Agamben called "the courage of hopelessness," his recognition that passive optimism is a recipe for complacency, and thus a hurdle to meaningful thought and action.

At the end of Communism, there was a widespread, euphoric hope that freedom and democracy would bring a better life; eventually, though, many lost that hope. That is the point where the real work begins. In the end, Ypi does not offer any easy way out, and therein lies the strength of her book. Such abstinence is what makes it philosophical. The point is not to change the world blindly; it is, first and foremost, to see and understand it.

“

Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.” But one cannot change the world for the better unless one first understands it. This is where initiators of Communist and liberal projects fell short.

”

injustices and became obsessed with reforming Western democratic societies from within. After writing a lesser-known sequel to *I Chose Freedom*, entitled *I Chose Justice*, he embarked on a crusade to discover a new, less exploitative mode of economic production. That quest led him to Bolivia, where he invested in an unsuccessful effort to organize poor farmers into new collectives.

Crushed by that failure, he withdrew into private life and ultimately shot himself at his home in New York. And no, his suicide was



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Global North Must Follow the Global South's Lead



**Gordon Brown**

*A former prime minister of the United Kingdom, is UN Special Envoy for Global Education.*

With her ambitious Bridgetown Agenda to reform the international financial architecture, Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley has become a powerful advocate for climate justice. But she is not the only world leader rising to meet the profound challenges we face today. A new generation of leaders from the Global South are making their voices heard.

Kenyan President William Ruto, for example, is forging a new path toward climate-positive growth in Africa: by taking advantage of its abundant natural resources and realizing its green-manufacturing potential, the continent could supply the developed world with goods and services to accelerate the clean-energy transition. In Latin America, Colombian President Gustavo Petro has called for a new Marshall Plan to finance global climate action. And Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, now in his third non-consecutive term as Brazil's president, aims to tackle hunger, poverty, and inequality, promote sustainable development, and reform outdated global governance arrangements during his country's G20 presidency in 2024.

After a decade of protectionism and fragmentation, these initiatives seek to build a global consensus around enacting sorely needed reforms. The post-COVID-19 world is currently experiencing what the G20 has called "cascading crises," including a dramatic surge in energy and food prices, unmanageable debt burdens in the world's poorest countries, and a record number of climate disasters. Developing countries need at least \$1 trillion annually

to make significant progress on the climate transition and to achieve their development goals. But the costs of inaction are even greater.

Our collective future hinges on a dramatic increase in funding, and the place to start is a levy on windfall revenues from fossil fuels. The global oil and gas industry's revenues were around \$4 trillion in 2022, according to Fatih Birol, the Executive Director of the International Energy Agency — an astonishing \$2.5 trillion more than the average in recent years.

Where has this money come from? The short answer is consumers. Some of the world's richest companies are raking in bumper profits from a cost-of-living crisis — largely fueled by high energy prices — that has disproportionately affected the poor and vulnerable. The largest beneficiaries of this effective tax on the global economy have been petrostates, whose total export revenues, when complemented by the export earnings of countries like Canada, Australia, Iraq, and Iran, totaled almost \$1 trillion in 2022.

The biggest of these countries, whose per

capita incomes are among the highest in the world, are well able to pay a voluntary levy on their exceptionally high hydrocarbon-export revenues into a global fund for sustainable development. A 3 percent tax on the 2022 export earnings of the United Arab Emirates (\$119 billion), Qatar (\$116 billion), Kuwait (\$98 billion), Norway (around \$174 billion), and Saudi Arabia (\$311 billion) would raise roughly \$25 billion in total — a sum not that much larger

than what the Saudis alone have recently spent on soccer, golf, Formula One racing, and other sports deals. It is fortuitous that this year's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) will be held in one of these countries, the UAE. Outlining his plan of action in July, COP28 president-designate Sultan Al Jaber named "fixing climate finance" as one of its four pillars, arguing that "all forms of finance must be more available, more accessible, and more affordable." Similarly, he has called on donor countries with overdue pledges to "show me the money."

But as president-designate, the UAE has the responsibility to take the lead. The best way to kickstart COP28 would be for Al Jaber — who is also the managing director and group CEO of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company — to announce that his country will contribute \$3 billion of its windfall earnings to a global finance facility and that it will seek to persuade its wealthy Gulf neighbors to do likewise. More than half of the contributions could go to the Loss and Damage

Fund, which was agreed at COP27 but still has gained little initial funding, with the rest used as capital and grant funding for new facilities for climate mitigation and adaptation.

And the international community must use this levy to kickstart a wider financing program for the developing world, based on the principle that rich, historically large polluters with the capacity to pay should contribute more to help poorer countries adapt to global warming. Not only should aid budgets be raised, but the International Development Association, the World Bank's financing facility for the poorest countries, must also receive a generous replenishment next year.

Providing \$90 billion in concessional finance for low-income countries is at the heart of the proposals from the economist N.K. Singh and former US Treasury Secretary Lawrence H. Summers in their two volumes of reports to the G20, the first proposed ahead of the recent G20 summit in New Delhi. As they argue, the system of multilateral development banks (MDBs) must increase its overall capacity, which means tripling its annual commitments to \$300 billion in non-concessional finance for middle-income countries.

As part of their proposals, which include recapitalization of the World Bank itself, they favor the wider use of guarantees. High-income countries could and should provide such guarantees that will enable MDBs to borrow from capital markets on attractive terms.

Such initiatives, if properly managed, could mobilize private-sector lending, which is essential to meeting our climate objectives. And it is the combination of the levy and the use of guarantees that, if agreed at COP28, could be the platform for achieving \$1 trillion in annual financial flows to developing countries by 2030.

Seventy-five years ago, under the original Marshall Plan, the United States lent \$13.3 billion (\$169 billion in today's money) to Europe for its postwar reconstruction. It was a remarkable act of global leadership that helped secure decades of stable economic growth and international cooperation.

While today's world and the crises it faces are very different, the scale of the response must be equally ambitious. Countries in the Global South are charting a way forward. Now, their rich counterparts in the Global North must step up and provide the necessary funding. The money is there, but we need the political imagination and will to use it, before the next crisis arrives.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Let Them Drink Oil



**Dickens Kamugisha**

Chief Executive Officer of the  
Africa Institute for Energy  
Governance (AFIEGO).



As a long-time advocate for human and environmental rights, I am terrified by the unprecedented frequency of extreme weather events. With each passing day, it becomes increasingly evident that we are in the midst of an escalating climate emergency. Disasters that past generations would have viewed as biblical or apocalyptic have become our new normal.

This includes the devastating floods and severe droughts that claimed hundreds of lives and displaced millions of people in Uganda and across the Horn of Africa, and the recent floods that wiped out entire cities in Libya. These events were not mere acts of nature. We have known for more than half a century that burning fossil fuels increases the planet's temperatures and that climate change would have catastrophic consequences. We persisted in burning them anyway.

But the striking image of a recent climate protest in southern France, in which climate activists painted a giant slogan condemning French oil giant TotalEnergies in the dry bed of the Agly River, is a stark reminder that some bear more responsibility for our current predicament than others — namely, the handful of rich countries that account for most of the world's global greenhouse-gas emissions.

But the real culprits are the fossil-fuel companies that have plundered Earth's resources

without exception.

Ultimately, it is clear that the longer we wait to reduce emissions, the greater our collective suffering will be. But fossil-fuel companies have a different perspective. In a recent regulatory filing, ExxonMobil asserted that "it is highly unlikely that society would accept the degradation in global standard of living required" to achieve net-zero emissions.

Despite being well-informed about the calamitous effects of their operations, these companies have ignored their own climate scientists to protect their vast profits — US\$56 billion in 2022 for ExxonMobil, whose CEO pocketed \$36 million. TotalEnergies, whose Tilenga project in Uganda wreaked havoc on local communities and flooded farmlands with contaminated water, earned \$36 billion last year.

This is why the phrase accompanying the French river painting — "If there's no water, let them drink oil!" — is a powerful rallying cry. Oil companies' extravagant and reckless behavior over the past few decades evokes parallels with France's Ancien Régime. Just as the aristocracy resisted change in the lead-up to the 1789 French Revolution, the fossil-fuel industry is unwilling to relinquish their power and influence, regardless of how their actions affect everyone else.

Contrary to the industry's claims, the net-zero transition will not lead to a cascading decline in living standards. Crucially, no one is calling for an abrupt halt to all fossil-fuel use. Climate models have shown that the best solution is to ban new exploration and shift to a more efficient system that uses only a fraction of the existing reserves while we build the infrastructure needed to maintain current living standards through clean energy.

The green transition is not a compromise; it is a promise. As numerous studies have shown, renewables and energy efficiency can power our homes, offices, cities, and industries, including for the billions of people in developing countries. This shift will create millions of new jobs, improve the quality of our air and water, and help mitigate the worst effects of climate change. Moreover, it will enable vulnerable countries and communities to adapt and build resilience against the growing threat of extreme weather events.

To be sure, financing this energy transition is a daunting challenge that will require a combination of strategies and mechanisms. Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley's Bridgetown Initiative, for example, advocates urgent reform of the global financial architecture. Similarly, the recent Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi concluded with a joint call for a global carbon tax.

Another promising idea, promoted by UN Secretary-General António Guterres and

several prominent economists and activists, is to cover the costs of climate-driven damages and the green transition by taxing fossil-fuel companies' windfall profits. As world leaders prepare for November's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in the United Arab Emirates, this proposal merits serious consideration. Holding the world's biggest polluters accountable is both morally justifiable

and economically sensible.

Amid today's myriad political and economic shocks, the climate protest in the Agly River understandably received very little attention. But I hope that this powerful image will resonate with others as it has with me. After all, this planet is our only home. Given the existential threat posed by climate change, we have no choice but to fight for its survival.

“

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and hooked our societies on their products. After all, oil companies knew about the environmental implications of their activities since the 1970s, but opted to conceal these findings and churn out disinformation about climate change. The record-breaking temperatures and unprecedented calamities we are seeing all over the world are a consequence of those choices.

To halt global warming, we must reduce and eventually eliminate our dependence on fossil fuels. As both the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the International Energy Agency have stressed, the only way to do so is to end all fossil-fuel exploration immediately and

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# Thought for the week

“To ask what causes poverty is like asking what causes cold. It is the absence of energy. Similarly, poverty is the absence of wealth. We should ask, "what are the causes of wealth?"

- Madsen Pirie  
British researcher and author

## Cooking with frozen vegetables



**F**rozen vegetables are a convenient way to add products to your daily diet. Frozen food companies package vegetables such as peas, carrots, beans, broccoli, and corn when they are fresh, preserving them by deep freezing. Although they are just as nutritious as fresh, it is how you prepare them that affects their taste and nutrients. For instance, boiling them in water can reduce their water-soluble vitamins. Cook them the right way to avoid mushy vegetables and add flavor with fresh or dried herbs.

**The nutritional truth:** Do not mistake the plastic packaging as a sign of less healthful ingredients. Frozen vegetables actually rival fresh ones in terms of nutrition, as they get picked and flash-frozen at peak ripeness when they are in a nutrient-rich state. In some cases, like when



the produce must travel far distances, frozen products may even prove healthier, since vegetables continue to lose nutrients from the time they are picked to when you finally add them to your meal. Plus, frozen vegetables are preserved without additives, unlike their canned cousins. Some products do contain extra sugar, salt, and other ingredients, so be sure to check the labels before purchasing.

**Shopping advice:** If you have not looked lately, the modern frozen aisle contains more than just peas and carrots. Today, you will find purple cauliflower florets, rainbow chard, artichokes, and okra, to name a few new arrivals. Many of these options also come pre-chopped and parboiled, meaning minimal preparation time for you. With all these options available, the question rises, when should you not buy frozen vegetables?

The answer is simple, stick with fresh options when the

ingredient, like carrots or broccoli, are available fresh for most of the year – or when the vegetable is the star of a dish or you need a firmer structure. For one, you will be happier with the results, and they often prove just as easy to prepare and are equally budget-friendly.

**Cooking advice:** Depending on the vegetable and the recipe, thawing techniques will differ. But one rule holds true across the board: Do not boil. Boiling will add more moisture to the product, increasing chances of an unpleasant ‘mushy’ texture and the loss of water-soluble vitamins. So skip the boil and simply steam or microwave the vegetables with two tablespoons of water after thawing. For most recipes, you can even skip the thaw.

Whether steaming or adding them to a cooked stew, use vegetables straight from the freezer to retain as much structure, color, and flavor as possible. When you add frozen vegetables to a dish in-progress, it is best to add them near the end of the cooking time to prevent them from breaking down too much.

That being said, not all frozen vegetables can adapt to the same recipe. Some vegetables do best blended into the background of a dish; others easily spotlight in dips and stir fries; and a small group can take center stage on the plate. By following the guidelines below, you will be able to use frozen vegetables to the best of their abilities. Better yet, you will be able to skillfully swap them into recipes when you do not have the fresh stuff on hand. Here is what you need to know about incorporating frozen vegetables into different types of recipes:

**Cold:** Bite-sized items – like frozen corn, peas, bell pepper strips, green beans, and chopped artichoke hearts – only need a quick thaw or steam before they are ready for the plate. Mix with cooked grains or sturdy greens for a not-sad desk lunch or toss with tangy dressing and let them stand on their own

**Crispy (and casserole):** Frozen asparagus, Brussels sprouts, broccoli florets, okra, butternut squash, and cauliflower tend to get a soggy feel when roasted or sautéed. It is best to lend them texture through breading and/or frying. When in doubt, use these ingredients in casseroles or gratins, or anything with a crispy coating.

**Baked:** You can add almost any frozen vegetable to a frittata straight from the package. Or add them to muffins, savory pie fillings, or puffed pastry pinwheels.

**Mixed:** Whether you choose meatballs, falafel, or gnocchi, most frozen vegetables do well when used as part of a

### RECIPE

## Charred Beetroot Hummus



**T**his is a perfect dip, along with a rainbow of crudité and crackers, for serving at a potluck dinner, for family holidays, or while entertaining friends and relatives. It is not only easy and quick to prepare, but also makes for a healthy snack. The recipe can be easily customized through the addition of various veggies and spices based on taste and preferences

**Total Time:** 45 minutes  
**Serving:** 8

#### Ingredients:

- 3 roasted beets (medium size) diced
- 4 cloves garlic
- 2 red peppers
- 4 tbsp + 2 drizzles olive oil
- 1½ cup boiled chickpeas
- 3 tbsp tahini (sesame seed) paste
- 3 tbsp lemon juice
- Salt as per taste
- 1/2 tsp zaatar (Middle Eastern herb mixture) powder

#### Instructions:

- Set the oven to 200°C.
- Place the chopped beets drizzled with olive oil, along with the garlic and red peppers in a roast pan and bake for 25 to 30 minutes. The aim is to achieve a delicious charred flavor
- Remove from oven and set aside to cool
- Add the roasted ingredients along with boiled chickpeas, lemon juice, salt, and tahini paste, to a mixer jar and pulse until the mixture is well combined
- Add olive oil and any drained liquid from the beetroot to the mixture.
- Blend until the mix achieves a smooth and creamy texture
- If needed, add a little water to obtain the right consistency
- Transfer to a large bowl or smaller individual bowl and garnish with olive oil, lemon slices, mint, zaatar powder and chopped green chilies
- Serve as part of a platter of veggies, bread croutons, chips, and pita bread.



Chef Chhaya Thakker

*Indian Chef Chhaya Thakker, who has a huge following online on WhatsApp and YouTube will be sharing her favorite recipes and cooking tips with readers of The Times Kuwait. For feedback, you can write to editortimeskuwait@gmail.com*

**patty.** Give thawed or steamed ingredients, like spinach, sturdy greens, and florets, a fine chop by hand; for tougher items, like carrots and green beans, a quick whirl in the food processor is recommended.

**Swirled:** Mix spinach, collard greens, chard, and kale with sour cream or yogurt for a quick and easy dip or blend with garlic and onions for a chunky pesto.

**Souped and stewed:** Want a foolproof way to use frozen vegetables? Make a soup or stew. The tenderness of most thawed vegetables makes for better soup, especially for blended soups. When making textured soups, just remember to add frozen ingredients towards the end of the cooking time and not before.

**Smashed:** Forget the avocado and give butternut squash, carrots, and other ‘mushy’ frozen vegetables a chance.



# WHO approves new vaccine to fight malaria

No, the catchy title for this article does not seek to elucidate the people or entities responsible for approving vaccines, it refers to the World Health Organization (WHO), which last week approved and recommended a new vaccine to protect children against malaria, a deadly disease that killed more than 600,000 people in 2021 alone.

The approved vaccine named R21/Matrix-M becomes only the second vaccine to win WHO approval for treating malaria in children. Developed by scientists at Oxford University, the vaccine will be manufactured by the Serum Institute of India based in the city of Pune. In a statement issued on the approval of the new vaccine, the Director-General of WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, noted, "As a malaria researcher, I used to dream of the day we would have a safe and effective vaccine against malaria. Now we have two."

"By adding the vaccine to the current tools that are in place, tens of thousands of children's lives will be saved every year," said epidemiologist Mary Hamel — who leads the WHO's malaria vaccine implementation



program — while speaking at a press conference called to announce the vaccine endorsement, at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, on 2 October.

Researchers behind the new vaccine say R21 is easier to make and cheaper than the first-approved malaria vaccine, called RTS,S/ASO1, which was approved by WHO in 2021. The new vaccine, a modified version of

RTS,S, is already approved in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nigeria, and will be available in mid-2024 at US\$2–4 per dose. On the other hand, RTS,S vaccine, produced by the UK-based global pharmaceutical giant GSK costs around \$9.80 per dose.

Sold under the brand name of Mosquirix, the RTS,S vaccine has been given to nearly 1.7 million children in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi. However, limited supply of the vaccine has meant that it cannot meet the demand to effectively combat the mosquito-borne disease. According to WHO, malaria infection kills more than 260,000 African children under 5 years old each year.

Serum Institute has said it has the capacity to produce 100 million doses of the new vaccine annually, and plans to ramp production to 200 million doses per year in two years time. "This is a very big step towards access and full supply to meet the demand," said Kate O'Brien, the director of the WHO's Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals.

Similar to the previous vaccine, the R21/Matrix-M requires three doses with a booster

dose given 12 months later. In granting its approval to R21/Matrix-M, the WHO noted that the vaccine met the Organization's target of 75 percent efficacy at preventing the disease in a trial with 4,800 children in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Mali and Tanzania. The children received three doses before a seasonal malaria peak in their countries. A booster dose administered after 12 months was shown to maintain protection.

Malaria is a life-threatening parasitic disease that spreads to humans by mosquitoes. It is traditionally found in tropical environments. According to the World Malaria Report 2022, prepared by WHO, the disease affected an estimated 247 million people and led to the death of over 619,000 people worldwide in 2021, with nearly 75 percent of those deaths being children under the age of five. This illness can lead to mild symptoms such as fever, chills, and headaches while more serious symptoms such as seizures, confusion, fatigue, difficulty breathing, and kidney failure, can lead to death.

One of the biggest challenges in treating malaria is that many of the symptoms are similar to other common respiratory infections, with fever, congestion, body aches, chills, and even nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. If not treated quickly, it can result in severe complications. Unlike conditions such as COVID-19 or influenza, malaria is not transmitted from one person to another but rather due to infected mosquitoes biting people, which makes it all the more difficult to stop the spread of disease.

The use of insecticide-treated bed nets, also referred to as 'mosquito nets', in regions of the world with malaria has been proven to be highly effective in preventing mosquito bites that spread the disease. But in many places where malaria is prevalent the availability of such nets can sometimes be a challenge.



## Gut microbiome impacts bone health

The human microbiome comprises trillions of bacteria, viruses and other microbes that live in and on our bodies. Over the past many years, studies have found that these microbiomes have a significant impact on our overall physiology, either due to their beneficial effects, or harmful impact on various aspects of our health and well-being.

In recent years, scientists have focused on the gut microbiome — the microbiome that inhabits our digestive tract — and how the health of these microorganisms affects the body's overall health. Previous studies have linked the health of the gut microbiome to various health conditions, including obesity, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), type 2 diabetes (T2D) depression and autoimmune diseases.

Healthy bones have also been associated with longevity, as observational studies have found people who live past 90 had a low percentage of osteoporosis and bone fractures, potentially contributing to their longevity. Scientists have also shown that a healthy gut microbiome plays a significant role in regulating the body's bone density and in improving osteoporosis — the condition where bone strength decreases due to a reduction in bone mineral density and bone mass, especially among aging women.

Now, researchers at Harvard Medical School in the United States have added to this volume of knowledge through a new study that identified specific bacteria in the gut microbiome linked to skeletal health. For their research, the Harvard scientists conducted an observational study using high-resolution imaging of the arms and legs of male and female participants in a previous study by the US National Institutes of Health.

Researchers found two specific types of bacteria in the gut microbiome that were linked to negative associations with bone health for older adults. Previous research has found that levels of one of these bacteria are higher in

people with lower physical activity and lower protein intake, and the other is linked to obesity. The scientists at Harvard admitted that they do not precisely understand why these bacteria would be connected to skeletal health, but studies have shown that obesity increases the risk of compromising skeletal integrity.

And, in the same vein, low physical activity has been shown to be related to bones that are less dense and strong. In addition, the bacteria in the intestine can produce other factors that may adversely affect the bone, namely factors that increase general low-level inflammation, which can have deleterious effects on bone cells.

The researchers of this study believe their findings may eventually provide a modifiable factor that can contribute to bone health. At present, the only treatments for osteoporosis are medications such as those prescribed to women experiencing osteoporosis.

Diet has been shown to profoundly impact bone health. For example, eating foods with high vitamin C such as citrus fruits and vegetables, will stimulate the production of bone-making cells and protect bone cells from damage. On a similar note, consuming foods high in protein and calcium have also been found beneficial to helping bones stay strong and healthy. The connection between the gut microbiome and the body's bones is called the gut-bone axis.

A previous review noted that changes in the gut microbiome can contribute to bone loss, and taking nutritional supplements with prebiotics and probiotics may help prevent or even reverse bone loss. For example, a bacteria in the gut microbiome has been linked to helping with bone formation and assisting in regulating bone metabolism. Additionally a review published in 2022 stated that gut microbiota may be a novel therapeutic target for treating osteoporosis, as well as bone fracture prevention.

The researchers behind the new study say they hope to expand their research to test if probiotics combined with prebiotics can modify bone metabolism in a favorable way. According to nutritionists and dieticians, probiotics are foods or supplements that contain live microorganisms intended to maintain or improve the 'good' bacteria (normal microflora) in the body. Probiotics are foods, typically found in high-fiber foods that act as food for human microflora.

Prebiotics are used with the intention of improving the balance of these microorganisms, while probiotics help maintain existing good bacteria. Probiotics are in foods such as yogurt and sauerkraut. Prebiotics are in foods such as whole grains, bananas, greens, onions, garlic, soybeans and artichokes. The researchers added that if their findings prove to be beneficial, this would allow physicians to recommend pro- and prebiotics as a dietary approach to preserving bone health.



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